

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld,

As members of the New Democratic Coalition, we are writing to share our concern with the way you are budgeting for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As you know, the House is scheduled to vote on the administration's latest supplemental funding request this week. We are deeply disturbed by the department's persistent inability or unwillingness to fund the war in the defense budget. The result of this reckless fiscal policy is to create two sets of books, discourage hard choices and removal or delay of less essential or troubled programs in the Pentagon's budget, and pass on untold costs to future generations. Furthermore, supplementals are typically not authorized and considered in depth like the regular budget, making this practice appear more like an attempted end-run around congressional oversight.

As you know, since 2001, the administration has requested and congress has provided \$303 billion in supplemental funds to pay for the cost of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, in addition to funding the regular Department of Defense budget. You have recently requested another \$65.3 billion in emergency supplemental funding for military operations for the balance of 2006, bringing the total amount provided for military operations to \$368.3 billion. Congress has also provided about 32 billion in non-DoD funding for reconstruction efforts for Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001 and with the 7.1 billion in non DoD spending in the latest supplemental request, total supplemental spending, if this latest amount is provided, will rise to \$407.4 billion.

We are concerned that over the years, you have perverted the purpose of emergency supplementals which are meant to be meet unexpected and sudden costs and help the troops. You have increasingly been using supplemental spending for items and programs that are either not emergency items or whose cost is expected, predictable, and should therefore be funded and authorized in the regular budget. For example, \$8.3 billion in the current request is intended to replace and repair existing equipment. This is an important cost that should be included in the regular budget, not as an afterthought in a supplemental that may or may not get funded. You are yet again including the Army's controversial modularity initiative in the supplemental at a cost of \$3.4 billion. While rebalancing the force is an important initiative, it is something that should be carefully considered in the authorization bill against other priorities, not rushed through a supplemental bill. It is also unclear how much of the supplemental request is covering true war-related costs and how much is being used to fund regular force structure, readiness, and modernization plans that would be funded in peace time.

The defense budget request itself raises a number of questions about the lessons that the Pentagon appears to be learning from our engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. For

instance, while the Reserve which is bearing a huge share of the fighting in the war on terror is reduced by 22,800 from levels authorized in 2006, national missile defense which is largely unproven is increased to \$10.4 billion. The services continue to have more basic unfunded requirements, such as \$16.8 million for improvised explosive device countermeasures for the Navy that did not make it into the budget.

As members of Congress who care deeply about national security and fiscal responsibility we urge you, in the next budget submission to:

- Request funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the regular defense authorization bill.
- Only include in the upcoming supplemental, funding for items that truly qualify as 'emergency' needs.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ellen O'Saunders

Ben Ray Lujan

Ron Kind

Janet Han

Stephanie Liscata

Ernie L. Enge

Charles G. Fitz

Allyn G. Schwantz
